

T W O
E S S A Y S.

I. ON SUICIDE.

II. ON THE MORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

BY DAVID HUME, ESQ.

NOW FIRST PRINTED.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED FOR C. HUNTER, PARLIAMENT-SQUARE.

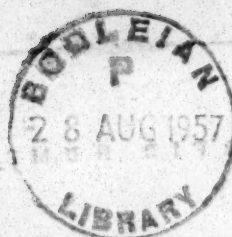
M.DCC.LXXXIX.

C N C

274231

20101001

1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033 2034 2035 2036 2037 2038 2039 2040 2041 2042 2043 2044 2045 2046 2047 2048 2049 2050 2051 2052 2053 2054 2055 2056 2057 2058 2059 2060 2061 2062 2063 2064 2065 2066 2067 2068 2069 2070 2071 2072 2073 2074 2075 2076 2077 2078 2079 2080 2081 2082 2083 2084 2085 2086 2087 2088 2089 2090 2091 2092 2093 2094 2095 2096 2097 2098 2099 2100 2101 2102 2103 2104 2105 2106 2107 2108 2109 2110 2111 2112 2113 2114 2115 2116 2117 2118 2119 2120 2121 2122 2123 2124 2125 2126 2127 2128 2129 2130 2131 2132 2133 2134 2135 2136 2137 2138 2139 2140 2141 2142 2143 2144 2145 2146 2147 2148 2149 2150 2151 2152 2153 2154 2155 2156 2157 2158 2159 2160 2161 2162 2163 2164 2165 2166 2167 2168 2169 2170 2171 2172 2173 2174 2175 2176 2177 2178 2179 2180 2181 2182 2183 2184 2185 2186 2187 2188 2189 2190 2191 2192 2193 2194 2195 2196 2197 2198 2199 2200 2201 2202 2203 2204 2205 2206 2207 2208 2209 2210 2211 2212 2213 2214 2215 2216 2217 2218 2219 2220 2221 2222 2223 2224 2225 2226 2227 2228 2229 2230 2231 2232 2233 2234 2235 2236 2237 2238 2239 2240 2241 2242 2243 2244 2245 2246 2247 2248 2249 2250 2251 2252 2253 2254 2255 2256 2257 2258 2259 2260 2261 2262 2263 2264 2265 2266 2267 2268 2269 2270 2271 2272 2273 2274 2275 2276 2277 2278 2279 2280 2281 2282 2283 2284 2285 2286 2287 2288 2289 2290 2291 2292 2293 2294 2295 2296 2297 2298 2299 2300 2301 2302 2303 2304 2305 2306 2307 2308 2309 2310 2311 2312 2313 2314 2315 2316 2317 2318 2319 2320 2321 2322 2323 2324 2325 2326 2327 2328 2329 2330 2331 2332 2333 2334 2335 2336 2337 2338 2339 2340 2341 2342 2343 2344 2345 2346 2347 2348 2349 2350 2351 2352 2353 2354 2355 2356 2357 2358 2359 2360 2361 2362 2363 2364 2365 2366 2367 2368 2369 2370 2371 2372 2373 2374 2375 2376 2377 2378 2379 2380 2381 2382 2383 2384 2385 2386 2387 2388 2389 2390 2391 2392 2393 2394 2395 2396 2397 2398 2399 2400 2401 2402 2403 2404 2405 2406 2407 2408 2409 2410 2411 2412 2413 2414 2415 2416 2417 2418 2419 2420 2421 2422 2423 2424 2425 2426 2427 2428 2429 2430 2431 2432 2433 2434 2435 2436 2437 2438 2439 2440 2441 2442 2443 2444 2445 2446 2447 2448 2449 2450 2451 2452 2453 2454 2455 2456 2457 2458 2459 2460 2461 2462 2463 2464 2465 2466 2467 2468 2469 2470 2471 2472 2473 2474 2475 2476 2477 2478 2479 2480 2481 2482 2483 2484 2485 2486 2487 2488 2489 2490 2491 2492 2493 2494 2495 2496 2497 2498 2499 2500 2501 2502 2503 2504 2505 2506 2507 2508 2509 2510 2511 2512 2513 2514 2515 2516 2517 2518 2519 2520 2521 2522 2523 2524 2525 2526 2527 2528 2529 2530 2531 2532 2533 2534 2535 2536 2537 2538 2539 2540 2541 2542 2543 2544 2545 2546 2547 2548 2549 2550 2551 2552 2553 2554 2555 2556 2557 2558 2559 2560 2561 2562 2563 2564 2565 2566 2567 2568 2569 2570 2571 2572 2573 2574 2575 2576 2577 2578 2579 2580 2581 2582 2583 2584 2585 2586 2587 2588 2589 2590 2591 2592 2593 2594 2595 2596 2597 2598 2599 2600 2601 2602 2603 2604 2605 2606 2607 2608 2609 2610 2611 2612 2613 2614 2615 2616 2617 2618 2619 2620 2621 2622 2623 2624 2625 2626 2627 2628 2629 2630 2631 2632 2633 2634 2635 2636 2637 2638 2639 2640 2641 2642 2643 2644 2645 2646 2647 2648 2649 2650 2651 2652 2653 2654 2655 2656 2657 2658 2659 2660 2661 2662 2663 2664 2665 2666 2667 2668 2669 2670 2671 2672 2673 2674 2675 2676 2677 2678 2679 2680 2681 2682 2683 2684 2685 2686 2687 2688 2689 2690 2691 2692 2693 2694 2695 2696 2697 2698 2699 2700 2701 2702 2703 2704 2705 2706 2707 2708 2709 2710 2711 2712 2713 2714 2715 2716 2717 2718 2719 2720 2721 2722 2723 2724 2725 2726 2727 2728 2729 2730 2731 2732 2733 2734 2735 2736 2737 2738 2739 2740 2741 2742 2743 2744 2745 2746 2747 2748 2749 2750 2751 2752 2753 2754 2755 2756 2757 2758 2759 2760 2761 2762 2763 2764 2765 2766 2767 2768 2769 2770 2771 2772 2773 2774 2775 2776 2777 2778 2779 2780 2781 2782 2783 2784 2785 2786 2787 2788 2789 2790 2791 2792 2793 2794 2795 2796 2797 2798 2799 2800 2801 2802 2803 2804 2805 2806 2807 2808 2809 2810 2811



• 1997年12月1日

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

RECEIVED: 1967-11-15

1954. 1. 22. 34

ESSAY I.

ONE considerable advantage that arises from Philosophy, consists in the sovereign antidote which it affords to superstition and false religion. All other remedies against that pestilent distemper are vain, or at least uncertain. Plain good sense and the practice of the world, which alone serve most purposes of life, are here found ineffectual: History as well as daily experience furnish instances of men endowed

B

with

with the strongest capacity for business and affairs, who have all their lives crouched under slavery to the grossest superstition. Even gaiety and sweetness of temper, which infuse a balm into every other wound, afford no remedy to so virulent a poison; as we may particularly observe of the fair Sex, who tho' commonly possess of these rich presents of nature, feel many of their joys blasted by this importunate intruder. But when sound Philosophy has once gained possession of the mind, superstition is effectually excluded, and one may fairly affirm that her triumph over this enemy is more complete than over most of the vices and imperfections incident to human nature. Love or anger, ambition or avarice, have their root in the temper and affections, which the soundest reason is scarce ever able fully to correct, but superstition being founded on false opinion, must immediately vanish when true philosophy has inspired juster sentiments of superior powers.

The

E S S A Y I. 3

The contest is here more equal between the distemper and the medicine, and nothing can hinder the latter from proving effectual but its being false and sophisticated.

It will here be superfluous to magnify the merits of philosophy by displaying the pernicious tendency of that vice of which it cures the human mind. The superstitious man says Tully* is miserable in every scene, in every incident of life; even sleep itself, which banishes all other cares of unhappy mortals, afford to him matter of new terror; while he examines his dreams, and finds in those visions of the night prognostications of future calamities. I may add that tho' death alone can put a full period to his misery, he dares not fly to this refuge, but still prolongs a miserable existence from a vain fear lest he offend

* De Divin. lib. ii.

his maker, by using the power, with which that beneficent being has endowed him. The presents of God and nature are ravished from us by this cruel enemy, and notwithstanding that one step would remove us from the regions of pain and sorrow, her menaces still chain us down to a hated being, which she herself chiefly contributes to render miserable.

'Tis observed by such as have been reduced by the calamities of life to the necessity of employing this fatal remedy, that if the unseasonable care of their friends deprive them of that species of Death, which they proposed to themselves, they seldom venture upon any other or can summon up so much resolution a second time as to execute their purpose. So great is our horror of death that when it presents itself under any form, besides that to which a man has endeavoured to reconcile his imagination, it acquires new terrors and overcomes

E S S A Y I.

5

overcomes his feeble courage : But when the menaces of superstition are joined to this natural timidity, no wonder it quite deprives men of all power over their lives, since even many pleasures and enjoyments, to which we are carried by a strong propensity, are torn from us by this inhuman tyrant. Let us here endeavour to restore men to their native liberty by examining all the common arguments against Suicide, and shewing that that action may be free from every imputation of guilt or blame, according to the sentiments of all the ancient philosophers.

If Suicide be criminal, it must be a transgression of our duty either to God, our neighbour, or ourselves.—To prove that suicide is no transgression of our duty to God, the following considerations may perhaps suffice. In order to govern the material world, the almighty Creator has established general and immutable laws

B 3

by

6 E S S A Y I.

by which all bodies, from the greatest planet to the smallest particle of matter, are maintained in their proper sphere and function. To govern the animal world, he has endowed all living creatures with bodily and mental powers; with senses, passions, appetites, memory and judgment, by which they are impelled or regulated in that course of life to which they are destined. These two distinct principles of the material and animal world, continually encroach upon each other, and mutually retard or forward each others operation. The powers of men and of all other animals are restrained and directed by the nature and qualities of the surrounding bodies, and the modifications and actions of these bodies are incessantly altered by the operation of all animals. Man is stopt by rivers in his passage over the surface of the earth; and rivers, when properly directed lend their force to the motion of machines, which serve to the use
of

of man. But tho' the provinces of the material and animal powers are not kept entirely separate, there results from thence no discord or disorder in the creation; on the contrary, from the mixture, union and contrast of all the various powers of inanimate bodies and living creatures, arises that surprizing harmony and proportion which affords the surest argument of supreme wisdom. The providence of the Deity appears not immediately in any operation, but governs every thing by those general and immutable laws, which have been established from the beginning of time.

All events in one sense, may be pronounced the action of the Almighty, they all proceed from those powers with which he has endowed his creatures. A house which falls by its own weight is not brought to ruin by his providence more than one destroyed by the hands of men; nor are the human faculties less his workmanship, than the laws of motion and gravitation.

When

When the passions play, when the judgment dictates, when the limbs obey ; this is all the operation of God and upon these animate principles, as well as upon the inanimate, has been established the government of the universe. Every event is alike important in the eyes of that infinite being, who takes in at one glance the most distant regions of space and remotest periods of time. There is no event, however important to us, which he has exempted from the general laws that govern the universe, or which he has peculiarly reserved for his own immediate action and operation. The revolution of states and empires depend upon the smallest caprice or passion of single men ; and the lives of men are shortened or extended by the smallest accident of air or diet, sunshine or tempest. Nature still continues her progress and operation ; and if general laws be ever broke by particular volitions of the Deity, 'tis after a manner which entirely escapes human

man

man observation. As on the one hand, the elements and other inanimate parts of the creation carry on their action without regard to the particular interest and situation of men; so men are entrusted to their own judgment and discretion, in the various shocks of matter, and may employ every faculty with which they are endowed, in order to provide for their ease, happiness, or preservation. What is the meaning then of that principle that a man who tired of life, and hunted by pain and misery, bravely overcomes all the natural terrors of death and makes his escape from this cruel scene; that such a man I say, has incurred the indignation of his Creator by encroaching on the office of divine providence, and disturbing the order of the universe? shall we assert, that the Almighty has reserved to himself in any peculiar manner the disposal of the lives of men, and has not submitted that event, in common with others, to the general laws by which
the

the universe is governed ? This is plainly false, the lives of men depend upon the same laws as the lives of all other animals ; and these are subjected to the general laws of matter and motion. The fall of a tower, or the infusion of a poison will destroy a man equally with the meanest creature ; an inundation sweeps away every thing without distinction that comes within the reach of its fury. Since therefore the lives of men are for ever dependant on the general laws of matter and motion, is a man's disposing of his life criminal, because in every case, it is criminal to encroach upon these laws, or disturb their operation ? But this seems absurd ; all animals are entrusted to their own prudence and skill for their conduct in the world, and have full authority as far as their power extends, to alter all the operations of nature. Without the exercise of this authority they could not subsist a moment ; every action, every motion, of a man innovates

E S S A Y I.

K

novates on the order of some parts of matter, and diverts from their ordinary course, the general laws of motion. Putting together, therefore, these conclusions, we find that human life depends upon the general laws of matter and motion, and that it is no encroachment on the office of providence to disturb or alter these general laws : Has not every one, of consequence, the free disposal of his own life ? And may he not lawfully employ that power with which nature has endowed him ? In order to destroy the evidence of this conclusion we must shew a reason, why this particular case is excepted ; is it because human life is of so great importance, that 'tis a presumption for human prudence to dispose of it ? But the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster. And were it of ever so great importance, the order of nature has actually submitted it to human prudence, and reduced us to a necessity in every incident of determining
concerning

concerning it.---Were the disposal of human life so much reserved as the peculiar province of the Almighty that it were an encroachment on his right, for men to dispose of their own lives ; it would be equally criminal to act for the preservation of life as for its destruction. If I turn aside a stone which is falling upon my head, I disturb the course of nature, and I invade the peculiar province of the Almighty by lengthening out my life beyond the period which by the general laws of matter and motion he had assigned it.

A hair, a fly, an insect is able to destroy this mighty being whose life is of such importance. Is it an absurdity to suppose that human prudence may lawfully dispose of what depends on such insignificant causes ? It would be no crime in me to divert the *Nile* or *Danube* from its course, were I able to effect such purposes. Where then is the crime of turning a few ounces
of

of blood from their natural channel ?--Do you imagine that I repine at providence or curse my creation, because I go out of life, and put a period to a being, which, were it to continue, would render me miserable ? Far be such sentiments from me ; I am only convinced of a matter of fact, which you yourself acknowledge possible, that human life may be unhappy, and that my existence, if further prolonged, would become ineligible ; but I thank providence, both for the good which I have already enjoyed, and for the power with which I am endowed of escaping the ill that threatens me.* To you it belongs to repine at providence, who foolishly imagine that you have no such power, and who must still prolong a hated life, tho' loaded with pain and sickness, with shame and poverty.--- Do you not teach that when any ill befalls me, tho' by the malice of my enemies, I
 ought

* *Agamus Dei gratias, quod nemo in vita teneri potest.*
 SEN. Epist. 12.

ought to be resigned to providence, and that the actions of men are the operations of the Almighty as much as the actions of inanimate beings? When I fall upon my own sword, therefore I receive my death equally from the hands of the Deity as if it had proceeded from a lion, a precipice, or a fever. The submission which you require to providence, in every calamity that befalls me, excludes not human skill and industry, if possible by their means I can avoid or escape the calamity: And why may I not employ one remedy as well as another?---If my life be not my own, it were criminal for me to put it in danger, as well as to dispose of it; nor could one man deserve the appellation of *hero* whom glory or friendship transports into the greatest dangers, and another merit the reproach of *wretch* or *miscreant* who puts a period to his life, from the same or like motives. ---There is no being, which possesses any power or faculty, that it receives not from
its

its Creator, nor is there any one, which by ever so an irregular an action can encroach upon the plan of his providence, or disorder the universe. Its operations are his works equally with that chain of events, which it invades, and which ever principle prevails, we may for that very reason conclude it to be most favoured by him. Be it animate, or inanimate, rational, or irrational, 'tis all a case : Its power is still derived from the supreme creator, and is alike comprehended in the order of his providence. When the horror of pain prevails over the love of life ; when a voluntary action anticipates the effects of blind causes, 'tis only in consequence of those powers and principles, which he has implanted in his creatures. Divine providence is still inviolate and placed far beyond the reach of human injuries. 'Tis impious says the old Roman superstition *

* TACIT. Ann. lib. i.

to divert rivers from their course, or invade the prerogatives of nature : 'Tis impious says the French superstition to inoculate for the small-pox, or usurp the business of providence by voluntarily producing distempers and maladies. 'Tis impious says the modern *European* superstition, to put a period to our own life, and thereby rebel against our creator ; and why not impious, say I, to build houses, cultivate the ground, sail upon the ocean ? In all these actions we employ our powers of mind and body, to produce some innovation in the course of nature ; and in none of them do we any more. They are all of them therefore equally innocent, or equally criminal.--- *But you are placed by providence, like a sentinel in a particular station, and when you desert it without being recalled, you are equally guilty of rebellion against your almighty sovereign, and have incurred his displeasure.---* I ask, why do you conclude that providence has placed me in this station ? for my part
I find

E S S A Y I. 17

I find that I owe my birth to a long chain of causes, of which many depended upon voluntary actions of men. *But Providence guided all these Causes, and nothing happens in the universe without its consent and co-operation.* If so, then, neither does my death, however voluntary, happen without its consent; and whenever pain or sorrow so far overcome my patience, as to make me tired of life, I may conclude that I am recalled from my station in the clearest and most express terms. 'Tis Providence surely that has placed me at this present in this chamber: But may I not leave it when I think proper, without being liable to the imputation of having deserted my post or station? When I shall be dead, the principles of which I am composed will still perform their part in the universe, and will be equally useful in the grand fabric, as when they composed this individual creature. The difference to the whole will be no greater than betwixt my

C

being

being in a chamber and in the open air. The one change is of more importance to me than the other; but not more so to the universe.

---'Tis a kind of blasphemy to imagine that any created being can disturb the order of the world or invade the business of providence! It supposes, that, that Being possesses powers and faculties, which it received not from its creator, and which are not subordinate to his government and authority. A man may disturb society no doubt, and thereby incur the displeasure of the Almighty: But the government of the world is placed far beyond his reach and violence. And how does it appear that the Almighty is displeased with those actions that disturb society? By the principles which he has implanted in human nature, and which inspire us with a sentiment of remorse if we ourselves have been guilty of such actions, and

E S S A Y I. 49

and with that of blame and disapprobation, if we ever observe them in others :—Let us now examine, according to the method proposed, whether Suicide be of this kind of actions, and be a breach of our duty to our *neighbour* and to *society*.

A MAN, who retires from life does no harm to society : He only ceases to do good ; which if it is an injury is of the lowest kind.---All our obligations to do good to society seem to imply something reciprocal. I receive the benefits of society and therefore ought to promote its interests, but when I withdraw myself altogether from society can I be bound any longer ? But, allowing that our obligations to do good were perpetual, they have certainly some bounds ; I am not obliged to do a small good to society at the expence of a great harm to myself ; why then should I prolong a miserable existence, because of some frivolous advantage which the public may perhaps receive

from me ? If upon account of age and infirmities, I may lawfully resign any office, and employ my time altogether in fencing against these calamities, and alleviating as much as possible, the miseries of my future life : Why may I not cut short these miseries at once by an action which is no more prejudicial to society ?---But suppose that it is no longer in my power to promote the interest of society, suppose that I am a burthen to it, suppose that my life hinders some person from being much more useful to society. In such cases my resignation of life must not only be innocent but laudable. And most people who lie under any temptation to abandon existence, are in some such situation ; those, who have health, or power, or authority, have commonly better reason to be in humour with the world.

A MAN is engaged in a conspiracy for the public interest ; is seized upon suspicion ; is threat-

threatened with the rack ; and knows from his own weakness that the secret will be extorted from him : Could such a one consult the public interest better than by putting a quick period to a miserable life ? This was the case of the famous and brave *Strozi* of *Florence*.---Again suppose a malefactor is justly condemned to a shameful death, can any reason be imagined, why he may not anticipate his punishment, and save himself all the anguish of thinking on its dreadful approaches ? He invades the business of providence no more than the magistrate did, who ordered his execution ; and his voluntary death is equally advantageous to society by ridding it of a pernicious member.

THAT suicide may often be consistent with interest and with our duty to ourselves, no one can question, who allows that age, sickness, or misfortune may render life a burthen, and make it

worse even then annihilation. I believe that no man ever threw away life, while it was worth keeping. For such is our natural horror of death, that small motives will never be able to reconcile us to it; and though perhaps the situation of a man's health or fortune did not seem to require this remedy, we may at least be assured that any one who without apparent reason, has had recourse to it, was curst with such an incurable depravity or gloominess of temper as must poison all enjoyment, and render him equally miserable as if he had been loaded with the most grievous misfortunes.---If suicide be supposed a crime, 'tis only cowardice can impel us to it. If it be no crime, both prudence and courage should engage us to rid ourselves at once of existence, when it becomes a burthen. 'Tis the only way that we can then be useful to society, by setting an example which if imitated, would preserve to every one his chance for happiness in life

life and would effectually free him from all danger of misery*.

* IT would be easy to prove that Suicide is as lawful under the Christian dispensation as it was to the Heathens. There is not a single text of Scripture which prohibits it. That great and infallible rule of faith and practice which must controul all philosophy and human reasoning, has left us in this particular to our natural liberty. Resignation to Providence is indeed recommended in Scripture; but that implies only submission to ills that are unavoidable, not to such as may be remedied by prudence or courage. *Thou shalt not kill*, is evidently meant to exclude only the killing of others over whose life we have no authority. That this precept like most of the Scripture precepts must be modified by reason and common sense, is plain from the practice of magistrates, who punish criminals capitally, notwithstanding the letter of this law. But were this commandment ever so express against suicide, it would now have no authority, for all the law of *Moses* is abolished, except so far as it is established by the law of Nature. And we have already endeavoured to prove, that suicide is not prohibited by that law. In all cases Christians and Heathens are precisely upon the same footing; *Cato* and *Brutus*, *Arria* and *Portia* acted heroically, those who now imitate their example ought to receive the same praises from posterity. The power of committing suicide is regarded by *Pliny* as an advantage which men possess even above the Deity himself. “*Deus non sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitæ pænis.*”

Lib. II. cap. 7.

ESSAY II.

BY the mere light of reason it seems difficult to prove the *Immortality* of the *Soul*; the arguments for it are commonly derived either from *metaphysical* topics, or *moral* or *physical*. But in reality 'tis the Gospel and the Gospel alone, that has brought *life and immortality to light*.

I. METAPHYSICAL topics suppose that the Soul is immaterial, and that 'tis impossible for thought to belong to a material substance.---

substance.---But just metaphysics teach us that the notion of substance is wholly confused and imperfect, and that we have no other idea of any substance, than as an aggregate of particular qualities, inhering in an unknown something. Matter, therefore, and spirit, are at bottom equally unknown, and we cannot determine what qualities inhere in the one or in the other. They likewise teach us that nothing can be decided *a priori* concerning any cause or effect, and that experience being the only source of our judgments of this nature we cannot know from any other principle, whether matter by its structure or arrangement, may not be the cause of thought. Abstract reasonings cannot decide any question of fact or existence.--But admitting a spiritual substance to be dispersed throughout the universe, like the ethereal fire of the *Stoics*, and to be the only inherent subject of thought, we have reason to conclude from *analogy* that nature uses

it

it after the same manner she does the other substance, *matter*. She employs it as a kind of paste or clay ; modifies it into a variety of forms and existences ; dissolves after a time each modification, and from its substance erects a new form. As the same material substance may successively compose the body of all animals, the same spiritual substance may compose their minds : Their consciousness, or that system of thought which they formed during life may be continually dissolved by death. And nothing interests them in the new modification. The most positive assertors of the mortality of the Soul, never denied the immortality of its substance. And that an immaterial substance as well as a material, may lose its memory or consciousness appears in part from experience, if the Soul be immaterial.--- Reasoning from the common course of nature, and without supposing any new interposition of the supreme cause, which ought

ought always to be excluded from philosophy, what is incorruptible must also be ingenerable. The Soul therefore if immortal, existed before our birth; and if the former existence no ways concerned us, neither will the latter.---Animals undoubtedly feel, think, love, hate, will, and even reason, tho' in a more imperfect manner than men; are *their* Souls also immaterial and immortal?

II. LET us now consider the moral arguments, chiefly those derived from the justice of God, which is supposed to be farther interested in the farther punishment of the vicious and reward of the virtuous--- But these arguments are grounded on the supposition that God has attributes beyond what he has exerted in this universe, with which alone we are acquainted. Whence do we infer the existence of these attributes?—'Tis very safe for us to affirm that whatever we know the Deity to have
actually

actually done, is best ; but 'tis very dangerous to affirm, that he must always do what to us seems best. In how many instances would this reasoning fail us with regard to the present world ?---But if any purpose of nature be clear, we may affirm, that the whole scope and intention of man's creation, so far as we can judge by natural reason, is limited to the present life. With how weak a concern from the original inherent structure of the mind and passions, does he ever look farther ? What comparison either for steadiness or efficacy, betwixt so floating an idea, and the most doubtful persuasion of any matter of fact that occurs in common life. There arise indeed in some minds some unaccountable terrors with regard to futurity ; but these would quickly vanish were they not artificially fostered by precept and education. And those who foster them ; what is their motive ? Only to gain a livelihood, and to acquire power and riches in this world.

Their

Their very zeal and industry therefore is an argument against them.

WHAT cruelty, what iniquity, what injustice in nature, to confine all our concern, as well as all our knowledge, to the present life, if there be another scene still waiting us, of infinitely greater consequence? Ought this barbarous deceit to be ascribed to a beneficent and wise being?—Observe with what exact proportion the task to be performed and the performing powers are adjusted throughout all nature. If the reason of man gives him a great superiority above other animals, his necessities are proportionably multiplied upon him; his whole time, his whole capacity, activity, courage, passion, find sufficient employment in fencing against the miseries of his present condition, and frequently, nay almost always are too slender for the business assigned them.—A pair of shoes perhaps was never yet wrought to the highest degree of perfection which that commodity is capable of attaining

attaining. Yet it is necessary, at least very useful, that there should be some politicians and moralists, even some geometers, poets, and philosophers among mankind. The powers of men are no more superior to their wants, considered merely in this life, than those of foxes and hares are, compared to *their* wants, and to their period of existence. The inference from parity of reason is therefore obvious.---

ON the theory of the Soul's mortality, the inferiority of women's capacity is easily accounted for. Their domestic life require no higher faculties, either of mind or body. This circumstance vanishes and becomes absolutely insignificant, on the religious theory: The one sex has an equal, task to perform as the other; their powers of reason and resolution ought also to have been equal and both of them infinitely greater than at present. As every effect implies a cause, and that another, till we reach the first cause of all, which is the Deity;

Deity; every thing that happens is ordain'd by him, and nothing can be the object of his punishment or vengeance.

---By what rule are punishments and rewards distributed? What is the divine standard of merit and demerit? Shall we suppose that human sentiments have place in the Deity? How bold that hypothesis. We have no conception of any other sentiments.--According to human sentiments, sense, courage, good manners, industry, prudence, genius, &c. are essential parts of personal merits. Shall we therefore erect an elysium for poets and heroes like that of the antient mythology? Why confine all rewards to one species of virtue? Punishment without any proper end or purpose is inconsistent with *our* ideas of goodness and justice, and no end can be served by it after the whole scene is closed. Punishment according to *our* conception, should bear some proportion to the offence. Why then eternal punishment
for

for the temporary offences of so frail a creature as man? Can any one approve of *Alexander's* rage, who intended to exterminate a whole nation because they had seized his favourite horse Bucephalus?*

HEAVEN and Hell suppose two distinct species of men, the good and the bad; but the greatest part of mankind float betwixt vice and virtue.---Were one to go round the world with an intention of giving a good supper to the righteous, and a sound drubbing to the wicked, he would frequently be embarrassed in his choice, and would find that the merits and demerits of most men and women scarcely amount to the value of either.---To suppose measures of approbation and blame different from the human confounds every thing. Whence do we learn that there is such a thing as moral distinctions, but from our own sentiments? ---What man who has not met with personal provocation (or what good natured

D

man

* Quint. Curtius lib. VI. cap. 5.

Deity; every thing that happens is ordain'd by him, and nothing can be the object of his punishment or vengeance. ---By what rule are punishments and rewards distributed? What is the divine standard of merit and demerit? Shall we suppose that human sentiments have place in the Deity? How bold that hypothesis. We have no conception of any other sentiments.--According to human sentiments, sense, courage, good manners, industry, prudence, genius, &c. are essential parts of personal merits. Shall we therefore erect an elysium for poets and heroes like that of the antient mythology? Why confine all rewards to one species of virtue? Punishment without any proper end or purpose is inconsistent with *our* ideas of goodness and justice, and no end can be served by it after the whole scene is closed. Punishment according to *our* conception, should bear some proportion to the offence. Why then eternal punishment
for

for the temporary offences of so frail a creature as man? Can any one approve of *Alexander's* rage, who intended to exterminate a whole nation because they had seized his favourite horse Bucephalus?*

HEAVEN and Hell suppose two distinct species of men, the good and the bad; but the greatest part of mankind float betwixt vice and virtue.---Were one to go round the world with an intention of giving a good supper to the righteous, and a sound drubbing to the wicked, he would frequently be embarrassed in his choice, and would find that the merits and demerits of most men and women scarcely amount to the value of either.---To suppose measures of approbation and blame different from the human confounds every thing. Whence do we learn that there is such a thing as moral distinctions, but from our own sentiments? ---What man who has not met with personal provocation (or what good natured

D

man

* Quint. Curtius lib. VI. cap. 5.

man who has) could inflict on crimes, from the sense of blame alone, even the common, legal, frivolous punishments? And does any thing steel the breast of judges and juries against the sentiments of humanity but reflection on necessity and public interest? By the Roman law those who had been guilty of parricide and confessed their crime, were put into a sack along with an ape, a dog, and a serpent and thrown into the river. Death alone was the punishment of those who denied their guilt, however fully proved. A criminal was tried before *Augustus* and condemned after a full conviction, but the humane emperor when he put the last interrogatory, gave it such a turn as to lead the wretch into a denial of his guilt. "You surely (said the prince) "did not kill your father."* This lenity suits our natural ideas of *right* even towards the greatest of all criminals, and even though it prevents so inconsiderable a sufferance

sufferance. Nay even the most bigotted priest would naturally without reflection approve of it, provided the crime was not heresy or infidelity; for as these crimes hurt himself in his *temporal* interest and advantages, perhaps he may not be altogether so indulgent to them.—The chief source of moral ideas is the reflection on the interest of human society. Ought these interests so short, so frivolous, to be guarded by punishments eternal and infinite? The damnation of one man is an infinitely greater evil in the universe, than the subversion of a thousand millions of kingdoms. Nature has rendered human infancy peculiarly frail and mortal, as it were on purpose to refute the notion of a probationary state; the half of mankind die before they are rational creatures.

III. THE *Physical* arguments from the analogy of nature are strong for the mortality of the soul, and are really the only

philosophical arguments which ought to be admitted with regard to this question, or, indeed any question of fact. --- Where any two objects are so closely connected that all alterations which we have ever seen in the one, are attended with proportionable alterations in the other; we ought to conclude by all rules of analogy, that, when there are still greater alterations produced in the former, and it is totally dissolved, there follows a total dissolution of the latter.

—Sleep, a very small effect on the body, is attended with a temporary extinction, at least a great confusion in the soul.---

The weakness of the body and that of the mind in infancy are exactly proportioned, their vigour in manhood, their sympathetic disorder in sickness; their common gradual decay in old age. The step further seems unavoidable; their common dissolution in death. The last symptoms which the mind discovers are disorder, weakness, insensibility, stupidity, the fore-runners

fore-runners of its annihilation. The farther progress of the same causes encreasing, the same effects totally extinguish it. Judging by the usual analogy of nature, no form can continue when transferred to a condition of life very different from the original one, in which it was placed. Trees perish in the water, fishes in the air, animals in the earth. Even so small a difference as that of climate is often fatal. What reason then to imagine, that an immense alteration such as is made on the soul by the dissolution of its body and all its organs of thought and sensation can be effected without the dissolution of the whole? Every thing is in common betwixt soul and body. The organs of the one are all of them the organs of the other. The existence therefore of the one must be dependant on that of the other.—The souls of animals are allowed to be mortal; and these bear so near a resemblance to the souls of men, that the analogy from one

to

to the other forms a very strong argument. Their bodies are not more resembling ; yet no one rejects the argument drawn from comparative anatomy. The *Metempsychosis* is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to.

NOTHING in this world is perpetual, every thing however seemingly firm is in continual flux and change, the world itself gives symptoms of frailty and dissolution. How contrary to analogy, therefore, to imagine that one single form, seemingly the frailest of any, and subject to the greatest disorders is immortal and indissoluble ? What a daring theory is that ; how lightly, not to say, how rashly entertained ! How to dispose of the infinite numbers of posthumous existences ought also to embarrass the religious theory. Every planet in every solar system, we are at liberty to imagine peopled with intelligent mortal beings, at least we can fix on no other supposition. For these then a new universe, must every generation
be

be created beyond the bounds of the present universe, or one must have been created at first so prodigiously wide as to admit of this continual influx of beings. Ought such bold suppositions to be received by any philosophy, and that merely on the pretext of a bare possibility? When it is asked whether *Agamemnon*, *Thersites*, *Hannibal*, *Varro*, and every stupid clown that ever existed in *Italy*, *Scythia*, *Bactria* or *Guinea*, are now alive; can any man think, that a scrutiny of nature will furnish arguments strong enough to answer so strange a question in the affirmative? The want of argument without revelation sufficiently establishes the negative.—“*Quanto*
“*facilius* (says *Pliny**) *certius que sibi*
“*quemque credere, ac specimen securitatis*
“*antigene tali sumere experimento.*” Our insensibility before the composition of the body, seems to natural reason a proof of a like state after dissolution.—Were our hor-

FOR

* Lib. 7. cap. 55.

ror of annihilation an original passion not the effect of our general love of happiness, it would rather prove the mortality of the soul. For as nature does nothing in vain, she would never give us a horror against an impossible event. She may give us a horror against an unavoidable event provided our endeavours, as in the present case may often remove it to some distance. Death is in the end unavoidable; yet the human species could not be preserved had not nature inspired us with an aversion towards it. All doctrines are to be suspected which are favoured by our passions, and the hopes and fears which gave rise to this doctrine are very obvious.

'Tis an infinite advantage in every controversy to defend the negative. If the question be out of the common experienced course of nature, this circumstance is almost if not altogether decisive. By what arguments or analogies can we prove any
state

E S S A Y II. 41

state of existence, which no one ever saw, and which no way resembles any that ever was seen? Who will repose such trust in any pretended philosophy as to admit upon its testimony the reality of so marvellous a scene? Some new species of logic is requisite for that purpose, and some new faculties of the mind that may enable us to comprehend that logic.

NOTHING could set in a fuller light the infinite obligations which mankind have to divine revelation, since we find that no other medium could ascertain this great and important truth.

F I N I S.



